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Wednesday, November 23, 2005

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Web-posted Nov 23, 2005

19 children join families here on Michigan Adoption Day

By CHARLES CRUMM

Of The Oakland Press

PONTIAC - For Kevin and Deborah Berke, Tuesday's appearance before Circuit Judge James Alexander was a pleasant end to a six-month journey.

Alexander finalized the West Bloomfield Township couple's adoption of 6-month-old Jordyn Leah in a ceremony marking the state's third observance of Michigan Adoption Day.

In all, 19 adoptions were approved by Oakland County Circuit Court judges throughout the day. The ceremony and adoptions took place in 43 counties across Michigan.

"We've been looking for a long time," said Kevin Berke. The infant girl is the couple's first child.

Adoption workers say Jordyn was dropped off at a hospital in May as a newborn.

"It was very tense because, in this case, it was an abandoned baby," said Debra Laye of Adoption Consultants of Farmington Hills, who helped the couple with the adoption.

It's the only day of the year where Oakland County Circuit Court convenes in the county commission auditorium instead of the judges' respective chambers.



Crystal Wynne of Flint smiles as she makes the adoption of her daughter Ananda, 6-month-old, official at Oakland Circuit Court's Commissioners Auditorium as her parents Roger and Jean Wynne watch during the Arthur Eugene Moore Champion of Children Award Ceremony. To purchase a copy of this photo. -Gary Malerba/The Oakland Press

"Adoptions are one of the few times that people are happy to come to court," Alexander said to a crowd in the auditorium there to witness two adoptions. The rest were to take place in the other judges' chambers followed by a reception for the new parents and their families.

Last year, 300 of the state's 2,684 adoptions occurred on Michigan Adoption Day.

But there's a need for many more.

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan said there are 19,000 children in the state in foster care and that "4,400 of them at any given time are waiting for permanent families."

Corrigan was on hand to present juvenile court Judge Eugene A. Moore with the first Champion of Children award named for his father, Arthur E. Moore.

The younger Moore, 69, has been a judge in the Family and Juvenile Division of circuit court since 1966. His father was a juvenile judge from 1938 to 1963 and credited with establishing many of the county's existing programs for juveniles such as the former Camp Oakland and Youth Assistance.

Moore said he wasn't accepting the award for himself, but on behalf of the court staff, adoption agencies and foster parents.

"Adoptions would not exist without these people," Moore said.

While Alexander handled the Berkes' adoption, Moore finalized the second adoption of the morning for another infant, Ananda Renee, who was adopted by Crystal Wynn, a single parent formerly of Pontiac who now lives in Flint and who appeared with her own beaming parents.

Moore noted family support in granting the adoption.

"Extended family is very important," Moore said.

The State Court Administrator's Office suggests people interested in becoming adoptive parents call the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange toll-free at (800) 589-6273 or visit their Web site at www.mare.org.

In Oakland County, prospective adoptive parents can contact the probate court at (248) 858-0030 or (248) 858-0031.

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